

**William Chirgotis**

Q: So where did your family come from in Greece?

A: I was born in Greece. I was born in [Pidesh?]. And my father and my mother, they came from Greece too, of course. And when I came to this country I was about 10 years old. And the person that baptized me in Greece, he was an architect.

Q: Really?

A: And it's strange. It's strange that he baptized me and eventually I became an architect. Very strange. And when I was in high school -- I went to a central high school.

Q: Ok, before what prompted your parents and you to come to the United States?

A: Oh, the conditions in Greece. Unemployment.

Q: What year was that?

A: Oh, I don't remember. I don't remember.

Q: You said you were about 10 when you came?

A: I would say around eight or ten. My parents never kept any records of anything.

Q: Well, what year did you come to the United States?

A: I don't remember. All I remember was, we got off the boat

and we wound up in Brooklyn.

Q: Right.

A: And we stayed [Brooklyn Lodge?]. There was a few Greek families there. We went to an apartment house and we were one of four or five Greek families in that apartment.

Q: Did you know the people in the apartment?

A: No, total strangers. All we knew was they were Greek. And I think two or three years later -- it wasn't too far ahead of that time -- we found out, or my father found out -- my father told me the story -- that there was more Greeks in Newark than there were in Brooklyn. And the reason why a lot of people landed in Brooklyn, New York is because when they came to Ellis Island, it was so close. Where else they going to go? They going to go to California? And so when my parents found out that there was more Greeks in Newark, then my parents, Let's go there. And there was a few other families -- excuse me. There was another Chirgotis family there in Newark.

Q: Relatives of yours?

A: Yes. Relatives. There's another Chirgotis family. And we separated since then and lost track of them. I don't know where they are. And we wound up in Newark. And then from Newark, as things got a little better, I got a job after I

went to college.

Q: I'm going to slow you down, because you're going to fast for me. Ok? You're jumping ahead.

A: Because there's so much. So many years.

Q: No, but that's OK. So you came --

(break in tape)

Q: Ok, your original point of entry was Ellis Island, right?

A: Ellis Island.

Q: And then you went to Brooklyn.

A: Brooklyn.

Q: And after a few years, you came to Newark.

A: Newark, New Jersey.

Q: OK.

A: We lived at West Market Street.

Q: All right. And --

A: There was a half a dozen Greek families on the same street. Alice Loomis lived there. And we got to know the Adams family, who had the Adams Theater, the Paramount Theater.

Q: Right.

A: And at that time, my wife now, when she was growing up she and our sister were cashiers for the Paramount. And Adams

was a Christian.

Q: OK. You lived on West Market Street. Did you live anywhere else in Newark, or just West Market Street?

A: No. 46 West Market Street.

Q: 46, OK. What elementary school did you attend?

A: I went to -- the elementary school was in Newark.

M1: Was it Warren?

A: Warren. Warren Street School? No.

M1: Burnett?

A: Warren Street School?

M1: [Robert Tree?].

A: No. It was north of High Street. I don't remember the name.

Q: That's all right. All right, and then you went to Central High School?

A: I went to -- I graduated from Central High School.

M1: What year did you graduate?

A: I don't remember.

M1: OK.

A: I could look it up.

M1: That's all right.

A: And so when I graduated, my instructor said to me, "William," he says, "now you're going to college?" College. How could I afford to go to college in those days, you know? And I says, "No." And he said, "Well, what are you going to do?" I says, "I don't know." He says, "You want to take my advice?" He says, "Take up architecture." I said, "Why?" So he said to me -- he said, "Do you remember some time ago, I had you draw up a garage?" "Yes." He says, "Well, one of the instructors there wanted a garage building back of his house." And then he said, "I came to you and I asked you to put an addition onto a house." So another instructor had a house and he wanted to put an addition to it. So he says, "I think," he says, "you ought to take up architecture." Look, now it's different. Now, and my children growing up, we know. We tell them what to do, we have money. But in those days, my father didn't have two nickels to rub together, OK? He had all to do to raise the five kids that he had. And so I says, "Well, I can't afford to go to college. You've got to have thousands of dollars." He said, "Well, if you move to Brooklyn," he says, "There's an adult school in Brooklyn." And he said to me, this school is subsidized by a Mr. Pratt. Anyway, that was his name. So he says, "That school, they teach architecture, they teach interior design, they do this, they do that." But he

says, "Before you get admitted there, you've got to take the examination." And he said, "You apply. And they can only accept so many people because they only have so many that they could take in. You've got to pass the examination." What the hell. I'm going to do it. I'm thinking, I'm going to go there, take the examination, see what happens. So I went there.

We went in the auditorium. The auditorium, there must have been 2-300 people there. And then finally they said, "Well, those that want to study architecture, over here. People want interior design, over there." You know. So they separated the people. And they had us interviewed by somebody. For example, for the ones for architecture, they had an instructor there and he interviewed me. Why do you want to become an architect? So I told him. I says, "My instructor thought that I am inclined to do drawings." So he says, "OK, you've got to take a two-day examination. If you pass it, because we can only take so many students." OK. So I made an application. I went there for two days. I took the examination. And so that summer I was up in Rye Beach in New York. I was working up there washing dishes, helping people sell, Frank, with his hotdogs. I remember

standing there just saying, "Red Hot Franks. Ice cold orangeade and lemonade. Come and get it."

Q: How did you get to Rye, New York to get the job?

A: Oh, that's another story. My father was working for [Sikoyos?] down on Broad Street and next store there was a restaurant -- a restaurant owned by a Greek. And this Greek had a relative above the place out there. So he says to my father, he says, "Why don't you send William out there for the summer? You know, wash dishes, glasses, stuff like that."

Q: What kind of a place did [Sikoyos?] have?

A: Had a fruit market.

Q: Fruit market on?

A: On Broad Street.

Q: On Broad Street.

A: 730 Broad Street, and on this side of Commerce Street. Commerce Street goes down on this side, there's the bank. And right next to the fruit store was the restaurant.

Q: Do you remember the name of the restaurant?

A: No. Not a restroom, a restaurant.

Q: A restaurant.

A: A restaurant.

Q: Do you remember the name of the restaurant?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Was it the Presto? No.

A: No, no. The Greeks owned a lot of restaurants on Market Street in those days. And anyway, so I came home and I says, "Mom," I says. "I can go to Rye Beach for the summer and make some money." And you know, talking about this thing is a long story. I don't want to take up your time.

Q: No, no, but we want to know. Go right ahead.

A: So my mother says to me, "No, my boy's not going to Rye Beach all by himself." No mother's going to let her kid go to Rye, New York. We say Rye, New York is like saying Hawaii, you know? So anyway, there's going to be somebody to take care of me, they're going to give me a place to sleep and bah, bah, bah. So my finally my parents let me go. And I went there. And we had to stay and -- like I told you, we were selling hot dogs, orangeade, lemonade, cigarettes. Cigarettes in those days were \$0.10 a pack. And I remember selling them. And eventually I became like a buyer there. Like when a person would come there once a week, he'd say, "How many cigarettes do you need?" So I'd say, well, give me one box of cartons, another of Lucky Strikes, the other one was something else. Anyway, so I



learned a lot of things. I was a young man, you know? And so finally one day I see a man -- oh, across the street from us there was a stairs. Stairs going up to a different part of [Oakland?] Beach. And I saw a man coming down. A man was coming down the stairs and he had a piece of paper and was going like these. I looked over there and I says, "That looks like my father! What's he doing here?" I didn't know he was coming there. So he came over. He says, "Boy, I got this letter for you." There's a letter of acceptance that said I was accepted.

Q: And he came all the way up there?

A: Yeah. Don't ask me how he got there.

Q: I was just going to ask you that.

A: Well, not everybody's got a car. And I know that he always had to take buses. Well, to go from Newark to Rye, New York, you take a taxi. Anyway, he got there. And I learned a lot of things. I had an opportunity to meet a lot of prominent people, too. Isaac McNelson I met up there. They were playing down in -- not Rye, New York, but New Rochelle. They played there. They called it a casino. I forget the name. It wasn't a gambling casino, but in those days it was a place where you had to go for dinner, and you do a little dancing, and then go home. And so just about that time --

it's a long story -- but I met my wife. And I said to her, I says, "Jean, I'd like to take you out."

Q: How did you meet Jean?

A: In the neighborhood. We lived on West Market Street and they lived across the street on High Street, and somehow I met her. And as a matter of fact, when my wife -- no, when my mother saw Jean for the first time, she said to me, "Boy, this is a good girl for you." It's exactly what my mother said. I'll never forget it. They always thought about marriage in those days, but you know. Anyways, so then I went to college and I graduated. I graduated. And right after I graduated from school, I got maybe -- you may not believe this -- I make out about a dozen orders. A dozen orders -- offers, from people who had daughters.

Q: (laughter) Ok.

A: They had daughters. And at that time, there was three boys that was gradating from college. There was me. There was a fellow by the name of Jimmy Pappas whose father was the church on High Street. He was the son of a priest. And the other fellow was up at (inaudible). Yeah. Jimmy Pappas. It was me Jimmy Pappas, and [Butch DeLock?], right? [Butch DeLock?] became a lawyer. So obviously the people that had daughters, they figured, well, I want my daughter to marry a

college graduate. So anyway, I met Jean. And my mother got to like her very much. And we got married then. We had a big wedding.

Q: Where?

A: St. Nicholas.

Q: Where was it at that time, on High Street?

A: Same place. St. Nicholas never been any place else. It was found and organized -- well, it was down on Washington Street.

Q: Right. And then it went to Academy.

A: Yeah. And then, after they -- yes, on Academy Street. You're right. I got some pictures taken on the stairs of the Academy building, at home. And what was I going to say?

Q: And then it went to High Street, in 19 --

A: It went to High Street. There was only one lot there, where the church was built. I was able -- later on, I was able to get all the property that St. Nicholas now has -- where they park their cars and have --

Q: Right, right.

A: --but St. Nicholas at that time was just a piece of land that only had St. Nicholas. And the people want to park their cars, they used to park down on High Street, two,

three, four blocks away. If it were raining, they had a problem. There was no parking facility. But because I was an architect and I was very friendly with the mayor at that time -- I can't think of his name.

Q: Carl? (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

A: I had him up to my house. Yeah, Carl. Anyway, so I told him we needed some land for the church. And he says, "Well," he says. "We bought some of this land because they started building the apartments." Some of the old buildings they're tearing down now.

Q: Right.

A: And so he said, "Well." He says, "We've been paying a dollar a square foot for this property, but because of the church," he says, "You can have it for \$0.75."

Q: Oh, wow.

A: So, how much land do you need? So I made a little drawing. I had St. Nicholas Church here. I had this piece of property, not quite down to High Street. But there's one building left there. And we got all this land, which had access to the street on this side. We got [Banana?] Street. I got all that land for them and I designed a building for them, which is now the (inaudible) home.

Q: Right, right, right.

A: And that's another story. When I designed it, of course the church wanted a place to have the facilities there. And I went down and I was doing business at that time with Capital Lighting, which one of the stores is now down on the highway. Anyway.

Q: Along Route 10. Yeah.

A: There's so many of these things that go through my mind. So I went there because I was doing business with him. And I designed several apartments. I used to buy lighting fixtures in there. So I said to him, "Look. I'm building a church down in their Newark. I want you to help me out. I want some chandeliers." So all the chandeliers that you see in that hallway, I got those chandeliers for nothing, believe it or not. He said to me, "Mr. Chirgotis have them for the apartments." There's an apartment around here.

Q: Oh, yeah, I know that.

A: I owned this apartment. I just sold it. I sold it four years ago. I had over 1,000 apartment units in New Jersey, which I owned as a landowner. Because financing was made very easy. That's another story. You see, it was right after the war, and when the soldiers came here from overseas, they had no place to live. So they got the Veterans Association to make housing available to them. Had

a reduced rate, so everybody got financing and apartments. You got a 100% financing and it didn't cost me a quarter. I got enough money to build it. And I started divvying it up. And then I went and built this apartment. I built one up in Chatham, which I sold a couple years ago. I had a big one down in South Jersey. But anyway.

Q: Did you go to the war?

A: No. That thing is another story. I was ready to go war. I was of age at that time. And the people that were signing up the people to go to war, they had the office on High Street. So I had to go there, because I was of age. And I went there and it just so happened I got married at that time. And because I was married and I had a wife, I was exempt. And that was a regulation at the time. So fortunately, otherwise I would have gone to war, if it wasn't for the fact I was just married. And then we took a honeymoon and went down to Florida. We drove down, came back.

Q: I have more questions. You obviously belong to St. Nicholas. Now, you said your father -- give me that street again, was it the second floor on Washington Street.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Tell me about that story.

A: Yeah, there wasn't much to say.

Q: Who was the priest at that time?

A: I don't remember.

Q: OK.

A: All I remember, my father took us there. I was a kid. He took us there for the service. And on the way out they had a tray, there. And people would leave -- throw a nickel, dimes, quarters. And I said to somebody, what's this for? They said, this is to pay the salary for the priest.

Q: Because they were poor, all of them. Everybody.

A: They had no organization.

Q: Right. Ok.

A: And then we went up to High Street, up there, and then I became president of St. Nicholas.

Q: I remember that.

A: I was president for many years. And there's one story I'll never forget, out of many. One year, we jacked the dues up at St. Nicholas. Like every year, we jacked it up. And at that particular time, we jacked it up \$2 and I was president at that time. So one Sunday, I was outside where the [fungotti?] was. We used to stand out there to sell the candles. And a little old lady came up there. I don't

remember her name. She came up to me, said, "Mr. Chirgotis the dues are going up." And he had a little pocketbook. She said, "The dues are going up. Next year I can't afford to pay it." So I said, "Ma'am, don't worry about that. The doors of the church are open." I said, "There's a door open for everybody." I'll never get \$2.

Q: That's right.

A: So I remember that story. And many others.

Q: Tell me about your father.

A: What about him?

Q: Well, what did he do. And your mother.

A: He worked in the food shop -- he worked for -- my mother never worked for anybody. But my father worked for [Sikoyos?], who had this grocery street on North Street. And he worked there for many, many years. And then we went out to California. We moved out to California because my mother's brother -- my mother had two brothers. They came to this country when we came here, and somehow they found their way out, Santa Barbara, California. And finally one day, he sends a letter to my mother and he said, "Why don't you come out here? I got a restaurant here. I have a job for your husband." So we lived on West Market Street at that time, and at that time -- because I remember, we gave



the furniture away. What are you going to do with the furniture? You know, things were different in those days. So what do you do with the furniture? So you've got beds in there, you've got storage, you have pots and pans.

Q: You lived in an apartment that you rented?

A: 46 West Market Street on the second floor. Well, anyway. So my parents gave all their furniture. Gave all the furniture away. Well, we had to. We couldn't carry it. We went by train out there. So we went to Santa Barbara. And on the train, they didn't have any eating rooms like they've got now. Now they've got restrooms and things. The train would stop, let's say, every couple hundred miles. And then you'd go outside. The train would stop, we'd go outside and get a hot dog or a sandwich or something. That was it.

Q: Your mother and father and the five children went out to California?

A: yeah.

Q: How old were you? You have any idea?

A: Well, all I know is I went to first grade and high school. First grade, second grade, I don't remember.

Q: And high school out there.

A: We only stayed there nine months. Because my mother got

homesick. When I say homesick, she had nobody out there.

At least when we lived on West Market Street --

Q: You had all those friends --

A: -- Greeks.

Q: -- everybody was Greek around there.

A: Greeks all over the place. We had a Greek church, had a Greek environment. So my mother got tired of it and she said we were going back. So we came back with nothing, just what we had. With whatever we had, we came back. And we got in with one of our relatives who had four boys. And my mother started all over again. And we wound up living on South Orange Avenue. We found a flat -- my father found a flat on South Orange Avenue. High Street is here, South Orange Avenue goes up that way. And we lived in a second floor flat there for only a couple years.

Q: That was still in Newark, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: OK. When did you establish your business in Newark?

A: Right after I graduated Pratt Institute. There was the Pratt Institute. What does it say? (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Second one over. Third one over, that's it.

Q: This one here?

A: That's where I graduated.

Q: School of Fine Arts, Pratt Institute. 1931, [Jimmy Ford?].  
OK. In 1931, OK. And did you open up your business in Newark?

A: No, I did not. I had to get a job first.

Q: OK.

A: You don't come out of high school and open up a business. So what happened is I worked for an architect on Broad Street. There was an architect there. I was recommended by -- it wasn't [Sikoyos?]. It was somebody that recommended. He knew him and he said, why don't you go see this architect and see if he could use you. Or maybe it was one of my father's friends, I don't know. So this architect had an office on Broad Street. So I went there, and I got interviewed. I told him I just got out of school. And he said, I can't use you. It was somebody, said he met him in -- I don't know.

Q: In Orange?

A: No, no. I forget. Anyways. There's an architect. So he says, Go see him. So I went to see him and I thought he had a real architect's office. It was in a garage!

Q: (laughter)

A: He was practicing in a garage and he lived with an office in there. And I mentioned I was looking for a job. And he said, Well, maybe I can use you for a while. So he gave me a job. I'm sorry, the Kitsas brothers. The Kitsas brothers, I don't know whether you knew them.

Q: Yes.

A: They had a restaurant.

Q: My parents knew them.

A: They had a restaurant. They had a restaurant up in Orange. On Main Street in Orange, one restaurant. Eventually they had those three brothers there, Peter -- oh, I forget. Louis. And anyway, they had a restaurant. And it so happened that as time went by, we got to know the Kitsas brothers. And they found out that I was working for an architect in Union. And he said to me -- Peter said to me, he says, You know, I know an architect that comes in everyday, and he has breakfast, he has lunch, he has dinner. And he says, Maybe you can work for them. I said, I got a job. Well, he said, maybe it's a better job. Anyway, to make a long story short, I worked for this other guy for a while. And finally I went to this guy, he gave me a job in Union. (inaudible) and I worked for him. And after I worked for him for a couple years, I got my license. When I

got my license I went into a business.

Q: So it was like an apprenticeship in working for them.

A: Sure. Yeah, yeah.

Q: OK.

A: Just working for somebody else.

Q: Right. What was family life like in Newark?

A: Family life? You mean -- within a walking distance, they lived on High Street, Marshall Street, West Market Street. On Market Street -- West Market, now, they call it. It used to be Market now it's West Market, I think. There was a Greek store there. That was owned by (inaudible). They're down in County River now.

Q: You mean Manis?

A: Manis. Tommy Manis. Tommy Manis. (inaudible). Down to County River.

Q: Yeah.

A: But they had a market. They had a food store on West Market Street.

Q: Right.

A: We lived over here, across the street. And I remember we used to walk over here, just about two blocks, and just go over there.

Q: And Dr. Antonius was down there.

A: Very good friends, because we lived across the street from his office. His office was where the street divides. West Market Street goes this way and East goes that way. There was a drugstore there. There was a drugstore there and Doc Antonius had his office there. We got to know Antonius really well, because we lived across the street. We were 46 West Market, Antonius was right there. Maybe down one block is High Street where the church is.

Q: When did you -- tell me, just give me some flavor of the traditions, the culture. Were you involved in just the Greek community?

A: No, no, no, no, no. We were -- slowly my practice grew very fast. Don't ask me why. And then finally, one day -- one day I designed a house for a client. And so one day, a fellow came in here and he said, Aren't you an architect? And I said, Yeah. I used to display my stuff, like I do now. And he said, I want you to design a house for me. He said, I like that house (inaudible). Can you design that for me? And I said, Yeah, I can design anything you want. So I designed a house for him. And after I designed his house, he came up to me one day for reason, I don't remember. He said, You know, Mr. Chirgotis, I got an idea

for you. I says, What? He says, Put your designs in a book and sell them. Because, he says, I have a relative who's in New York, and he publishes books. And he's on 32nd Street -- he gave me the address. So I didn't give it much thought you know. I said, I'm not interested.

So to make a long story short, I went home, I told my wife. I said, Jeanie, there's a person in New York. He said the guy would put my plans in a book, because I have plans just like this, you know? And I said, I don't want to bother with it. I'm too busy to do that. And I was. I was a young practitioner. I didn't have time to sit down and put books like this out. So anyway, I give that idea up. And one day I went home. I said, Jeannie, you know something? I'm going into the plan book business. She said, What made you change your mind? I said, I thought about it, I got nothing to lose. So I went and I saw this guy in New York. And he says, We'll put a book out for you. It wasn't a book like this. It was a book more like --

Q: I've seen your books.

A: Here. Right here.

Q: Yeah. Right.

A: Like these.

Q: Right.

A: So he said to me -- It's all right. He said to me that -- Well, I says, who's going to pay for this? I mean, it costs money, of course.

Q: Right.

A: He says, I can put out 100,000 copies of this book and then we can sell these plans all over the country. Because he was also publishing books on how to play golf, how to play tennis. That was his business, putting books out. And I liked the idea, when he says to me, I can put 100,000 copies out. I says, who's going to pay for this? Well, he says, I'll tell you what we do. He says, how much are you going to sell these plans for? I said, I don't know. I didn't know. So anyway, I said, give me some time to think about this, then I'll be in touch with you. So I came home. I said to him, I'll let you know. I came home. I thought about it, I thought about it. Then I figured however much it would cost me for one set of plans and I had to set a certain price. So I went back to him and I said to him, OK, we'll sell four sets of plans -- because first I asked  
(break in tape)

So I said to him, We can sell four sets of these. You need



at least four sets of plans to build a house. You need one for the building department, you need one for the contractor, you need one for the electrician, one for the planner. Four sets for \$35. It wasn't enough, but it was something to start on, you know? So I figure, let's see what happens. I got nothing to lose. So he says, OK, we go 50-50. He says, I'll get the orders for the book and then I'll send you the orders. You'll make the plans out and then we'll split. So, I figured, well, this is good. So the first year went by and I was making a good profit and I said, Damnit, this is the business, instead of sitting here and drawing plans. Here, you just print these plans and out they go. And I've been in the planning business since. Look at this one.

Q: I know.

A: There isn't another architect in the country that has this. These are all my plans. Two-story houses, one-story ranches, Colonials, modern.

Q: That's terrific.

A: This is my favorite book. And I put out a lot of these books.

Q: I remember these.

A: Yeah.

Q: This is the first time I've seen this.

A: Yeah, this is an encyclopedia.

Q: Yeah. Beautiful.

A: And next Sunday's Star (inaudible). And advertiser's book.

Q: Oh, OK. We'll look for it.

A: Yeah.

Q: When did you become a citizen? When did your parents and the children become citizens? (pause) Well, if you later on remember it, let me know. Did anyone help you when you and your members first arrived in America?

A: Help us?

Q: Yeah.

A: Only help we got was from Mr. [Pichoyo?]. When I say help, he gave us a job.

Q: Right. How did you meet him?

A: My father somehow met him. You know, in those days, if you didn't know anybody you'd say, well I know a John Jones. What does he do? Well, he's selling pineapples or something. So you would meet people that way. We didn't know anybody. Come from Greece, who you know?

Q: So when you came here, you knew absolutely no one? How did you meet those people that you went to Brooklyn with? How

did you know about them, that there were Greeks?

A: We were told -- we were told that there was a house that had Greeks there.

Q: Who told you?

A: Somebody told my father, I don't know.

Q: Oh, when you arrived in Ellis Island.

A: When you come through Ellis Island, you ask somebody --

Q: Right.

A: -- where are the Greeks living? Or where are the Italians living?

Q: OK.

A: They'd say, over there. And we moved into a house and there was four other families in there. And somehow we got to know other people.

Q: OK. Did your life center around the Greek-American community when you were growing up?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Were you involved in it?

A: We were quite involved in it. (inaudible) [order of Hippa?].

Q: No, I know that. No. But I mean, prior to your developing

as you grew older. But in the early years.

A: St. Nicholas.

Q: St. Nicholas. Involvement in church. You went to Greek school?

A: Yeah. Had to.

Q: (laughter)

A: We had to.

Q: You had to. OK. Did you go to the Greek school on Academy Street?

A: Academy first. And then it moved up to High Street.

Q: And to the High Street. OK. And were you involved with any other people in the community besides the Greeks. As you were growing up. In elementary school and high school.

A: No, mostly it was the Greek community.

Q: OK. I'm going to go back to the church. How did your family prepare for Holy Week?

A: We were just told, Go to church. And bring some money to put in the [disko?]. That's it.

Q: And that's it?

A: Yeah.

Q: What did your mother do at home?

A: Just a housewife. She never worked.

Q: No, but I mean for Holy Week. Any preparations.

A: Well, we used to go to Prince Street and we'd do our shopping there. Don't ask me why, but that's where they had the people that sell chickens, there, selling shoes.

Q: I remember Prince Street.

A: We used to go to Prince Street once in a while. We'd walk there. And my mother would do her shopping there, with a couple handbags.

Q: What church services did your family attend during Holy Week? Did you go every night to church or just Friday night, after Saturday?

A: Holy Week.

Q: Yeah.

A: Usually Palm Sunday.

Q: Palm Sunday.

A: Palm Sunday and sometimes Sunday.

Q: OK. How did you celebrate -- what did you do on Good Friday? Did you fast?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Q: All right.

A: It was a tradition for Greeks.

Q: OK, that's what I want to know. That's what I'm talking about, the traditions. Fasting, Holy Week. And then on Holy Saturday, what happened?

A: Nothing. Go to church.

Q: Did you have a dinner when you came back from the [anesthesia?] or did you have it on Sunday? You don't remember. Did your parents invite people to celebrate Easter?

A: No, it was just the family.

Q: It was just the family. OK. Let's see. How did your family celebrate your father's name day? What was your father's name?

A: Today's St. John's Day. (inaudible) and that's it.

Q: You didn't have people coming to the house?

A: Well, we'd have some close friends. In those days, you'd invite your neighbors there, you know?

Q: Right. And what preparations did your mother make? Do you remember?

A: Not much. Instead of serving, let's say, three people or five people, you'd serve seven people. I remember a Greek funeral we had the one time. When we lived on West Market

Street a little girl died. And do you remember Alice  
[Trumis?]?

Q: I remember the name.

A: Yeah. They lived next door to us. (overlapping dialogue;  
inaudible) And a little girl died in the neighborhood,  
there. And we were invited to go to a funeral for the first  
time in life. So we went. They were up on the second  
floor. So we went up there to see the little girl. It was  
a little girl. We went up there and they had -- see, now  
they have the casket laying like this. At that time, they  
had a casket and child like this.

Q: Oh, really?

A: Yeah. And you'd walk in, and there was the little child,  
right over there. Well, of course, now they put (inaudible)  
like this. But it was the first funeral I went to and I saw  
this little girl. And I stood there and I looked at her.  
She looked beautiful, but the casket was --

M1: [Green cloth?].

Q: Isn't that strange?

A: Yeah. So I don't know. I remember that funeral.

Q: Was Rotunda the one who did that?

A: Yeah. He was the funeral director next door. Two or three

doors down the street.

M1: And you lived right next to the (inaudible) Theater?

A: Yeah. I used to sneak in there.

M1: The (inaudible) Theater.

A: Yeah. You know, that had a back entrance on the street coming -- what is it, 13th Avenue?

M1: It's Nelson Place.

A: Nelson Place.

M1: Where I lived.

A: Yeah.

M1: I lived on Nelson Place.

A: And I'll tell you what happened. At that time, we were kids. We were devils too. I had a next-door neighbor -- he wasn't Greek. And he says to me, Let's go down and go to a movie. I says, Well, we gotta get money. No, you don't any money, he says. Come on. So we went down, came around on High Street. Up the street there. There was two windows there. Two windows in there that opened up to the men's room. And all you had to do was open the window and sneak in there.

M1: That's so interesting. (laughter)

A: Yeah. So this fellow here with me, he says, look -- we were



young kids though. Couldn't get in there. So all you got to do is open the window and go in there. So he got in. Of course, the he pulled me up, I got up. We wound up in the men's room. (laughter) So we're in the men's room. Now where do you go? You go to the orchestra or you go to the balcony. So I know we found stairs there and sat and watched the movie. Hey, this is a good deal. Get something for nothing.

Q: How much was the movie in those days?

A: Oh, only about a quarter or something. \$0.10. No, it was \$0.10. I remember one time, I wanted to go with him to a movie. And my mother was up on the second floor and I'm out in the street there. I says, mom, \$0.10. We want to go to a movie. So my mom threw me \$0.10 downstairs and I went with him. So we paid our way in. \$0.10 for kids. Adults, I guess, must have been a quarter or something like that.

Q: That's the kind of story I want to here.

M1: Was there a barber shop next to that theater? Because on Nelson Place was a barber shop, George's Barbershop. No, it wasn't there then. Maybe it came later on.

Q: Tell me some more stories, Bill, about life as a young kid in Newark.

A: Well, I got very involved in the church. I was on the

committees on the church. And of course they have a supreme president.

Q: Right.

A: I was supreme president for two terms, which was unusual in those days. Look at that ad over there. See it? That was before I was elected president. They put this ad in the paper. It was published in the (inaudible) Chronicle. August 22, 1974. (inaudible) needs an architect (inaudible).

Q: (laughter) I remember, Bill! I remember.

A: They put that ad in. (laughter) And since then, I got pictures of all the presidents here.

Q: And you got a Truman Memorial. And where is it now? They posted it.

A: Well, you know something about the Truman? I got involved with the Truman Foundation. There was something I liked about Truman, so I got involved. Somebody told me to get involved. So to make a long story short -- of course, I could tell you about the Truman thing and be here for hours. So finally I joined the organization. There was nobody -- just a group of people that kept going on together. So finally I built up a foundation. I say, we ought to have a name to publicize Truman. So to make a long story short,

(inaudible) with me, I was making a lot of money.

(pause)

You have no idea what I did for the Truman Foundation. I have a picture of Truman, the President? I paid for the statue of him.

Q: Yes, I know. And now they've moved that statue. It's there. They put it up again. They've taken it down, they put it up again. It's not far from where it was, but it's there.

A: Anyway, the Truman Foundation, it got to a point where I was the biggest contributor. I want to show you something. (inaudible) process of bringing special ones to it. And I had some newspaper clippings here.

M1: Could it be --

**End - William Chirgotis**